

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 00975

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, TH
SUBJECT: RTG REFUGEE DETENTION CENTER IN NORTH THAILAND

1. AS PART OF ITS ANNOUNCED POLICY, EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 15, THAT HAD THE INTENT OF REDUCING THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES FROM LAOS AND CAMBODIA, THE RTG DECIDED TO PLACE NEWCOMERS IN THREE OF ITS OWN CAMPS OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES. IN THE NORTHEAST, THE CAMP FOR LAO IS AT NAKORN PHANOM; AND FOR CAMBODIANS, IN BURIRAM. THE CAMP FOR THE NORTH IS AT MAE CHAN DISTRICT OF CHEING RAI PROVINCE.

2. TWO MEMBERS OF THE JOINT VOLUNTARY AGENCY STAFF OF THE EMBASSY REFUGEE SECTION VISITED THE MAE CHAN CAMP JANUARY 27. THEY TRAVELLED 28 KILOMETERS NORTH OF CHIENG RAI CITY ALONG THE MAIN ROAD TO MAE SAI AND THEN TWO KILOMETERS EAST TO ARRIVE AT THE TEMPORARY DETENTION CENTER, LOCATED IN A FORESTRY DEPARTMENT PARK. A PERMANENT CAMP IS SCHEDULED TO OPEN AT THE END OF JANUARY. ITS LOCATION WILL REPORTEDLY BE TEN KILOMETERS FROM MAE CHAN DISTRICT TOWN.

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3. THE MAE CHAN DETENTION CENTER HAD 39 REFUGEES JANUARY 7TH. THE 20 HMONG AND 19 ETHNIC LAO ARE HOUSED IN A CEMENT SCHOOL IN A REMOTE CORNER OF THE PARK. REFUGEES SLEEP ON MATS ON THE FLOOR. BATHING AND TOILET FACILITIES ARE ADEQUATE, AND THERE IS A GOOD WELL ADJACENT TO THE SCHOOL. PROVINCE OFFICIALS DISTRIBUTE

FOOD EVERY FIVE DAYS. REFUGEES ARE ALLOTTED A HALF KILO OF RICE PER PERSON PER DAY, ALONG WITH FISH SAUCE, SALT, AND DRIED FISH. THEY ALSO SOMETIMES RECEIVE PORK AND VEGETABLES.

4. THE CENTER HAS NO MEDICAL FACILITIES, AND THAI RED CROSS HEALTH TEAMS MAKE NO VISITS THERE. REFUGEES WITH SERIOUS MEDICAL PROBLEMS CAN BE TAKEN TO THE DISTRICT HOSPITAL IN MAE CHAN.

5. FIVE VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS, WHO ALSO LIVE IN THE SCHOOL, GUARD THE CENTER. THE SOLDIER ON DUTY WAS IN PARTIAL UNIFORM AND UNARMED. HE WAS CORDIAL TO THE JVA REPRESENTATIVES, FREELY GAVE THEM INFORMATION, AND OBVIOUSLY HAD GOOD RAPPORT WITH THE REFUGEES, WHO WERE FREE TO ENTER THE CONVERSATION. THE REFUGEES, WHO STILL HAD ALL THEIR POSSESSIONS INCLUDING WATCHES AND JEWELRY, WERE CONFINED TO THE SCHOOLYARD, HOWEVER.

6. THE JVA REPRESENTATIVES TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THEIR PRESENCE TO INTERVIEW TWO PERSONS POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES UNDER THE INDOCHINESE PAROLE PROGRAM-77.

WHITEHOUSE

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